

MARKET STREET ELEVATED RAILWAY, 56TH STREET STATION  
Intersection of Market and 56th Streets  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Philadelphia

HAER No. PA-507-D

HAER  
PA  
57-PHILA,  
719D-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service  
Philadelphia Support Office  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

MARKET STREET ELEVATED RAILWAY, 56TH STREET STATION HAER NO. PA-507-D

HAER  
PA  
SI-PHILA,  
719 D-

**Location:** Intersection of Market and 56<sup>th</sup> Streets  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania  
USGS Quad: Lansdowne, PA and Philadelphia, PA 1:24,000  
UTM Coordinates: 18.480085.4423231

**Construction**  
**Date:** 1906 - 1907

**Builder:** Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company

**Chief**  
**Engineer:** William S. Twining

**Present**  
**Owner:** Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority  
1234 Market Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

**Present Use:** Market Street Elevated Railway Station

**Significance:** The 56th Street Station is an elevated station located above the intersection of Market and 56<sup>th</sup> Streets. An intermediary station along the elevated line, it enabled residents within a few-blocks radius as well as passengers transferring from trolley lines to commute on the Elevated to Center City, Philadelphia. The station is a contributing structure within the Market Street Elevated Railway Historic District. The station is significant historically for its role in the residential development of this part of West Philadelphia, and architecturally for its design. Like many of the other stations along the Elevated, the 56<sup>th</sup> Street Station embodies the distinctive characteristics of a particular early twentieth-century architectural style. Similar to the 63<sup>rd</sup>, 52<sup>nd</sup>, and 46<sup>th</sup> Street Stations located to the west and east, the 56<sup>th</sup> Street Station exhibits classical and eclectic detailing. The eastbound and westbound platform buildings are enclosed with copper paneling and pilasters. Other features include metal balustrades with quatrefoil motifs, clerestory windows, and bracketed cornices.

**Project**  
**Information**  
**Statement:** The Market Street Elevated Railway between Millbourne Station in Delaware County and 46<sup>th</sup> Street Station in Philadelphia will be reconstructed. The project includes replacement of the Millbourne Station and the Market Street Elevated superstructure. Plans call for the reconstruction of the stations from 63<sup>rd</sup> Street to 46<sup>th</sup> Street, but efforts will be made to retain historic features where possible. To mitigate the adverse effect, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission stipulated HAER documentation of the existing structures. This documentation was undertaken to fulfill that stipulation.

Neeta Jitendra Desai  
Cultural Heritage Research Services, Inc.  
403 East Walnut Street  
North Wales, PA 19454

## INTRODUCTION

The Market Street Elevated Railway extends west-east along Market Street between 69th Street in Upper Darby Township, Delaware County, and 46<sup>th</sup> Street in the City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania. Constructed between 1904 and 1908, the elevated structure is situated along Market Street between 63<sup>rd</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup> Streets. West of 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, the railway crosses Cobbs Creek, a waterway that forms the boundary between Philadelphia and Delaware Counties. From this point, the railway travels at ground level through Millbourne and terminates at the 69th Street Terminal in Upper Darby Township, Delaware County. The tracks and stations form part of the Market-Frankford Line, which is owned and operated by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority (SEPTA), 1234 Market Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19107.

The Market Street Elevated Railway (HAER No. PA-507) is composed of the Market Street Elevated superstructure, an associated substation (HAER No. PA-507-E), and the following railway stations: 69th Street Terminal (HAER No. PA-507-A); Millbourne Station (HAER No. PA-507-B); 63<sup>rd</sup> Street Station (HAER No. PA-507-C); 60<sup>th</sup> Street Station; 56<sup>th</sup> Street Station (HAER No. PA-507-D); 52<sup>nd</sup> Street Station (HAER No. PA-507-F); and 46<sup>th</sup> Street Station (HAER No. PA-507-G). The Market Street Elevated Railway Historic District, which consists of the Market Street Elevated Railway, was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, historical significance and Criterion C, design/construction in August 1996.

The 56<sup>th</sup> Street Station is an elevated station located above the intersection of Market and 56<sup>th</sup> Streets. An intermediary station along the elevated line, it enabled residents within a few-blocks radius as well as passengers transferring from trolley lines to commute on the Elevated to Center City, Philadelphia. The station is a contributing structure within the Market Street Elevated Railway Historic District. The station is significant historically for its role in the residential development of this part of West Philadelphia, and architecturally for its design. Like many of the other stations along the Elevated, the 56<sup>th</sup> Street Station embodies the distinctive characteristics of a particular early twentieth-century architectural style. Similar to the 63<sup>rd</sup>, 52<sup>nd</sup>, and 46<sup>th</sup> Street Stations located to the west and east, the 56<sup>th</sup> Street Station exhibits classical and eclectic detailing. The eastbound and westbound platform buildings are enclosed with copper paneling and pilasters. Other features include metal balustrades with quatrefoil motifs, clerestory windows, and bracketed cornices. Modern alterations include the construction of mezzanine levels, reconstruction of stairways, installation of modern token booths, and the application of metal over the original oak walls of the station interiors. Despite these changes, the 56<sup>th</sup> Street Station represents a significant and distinguishable entity that has served residents of this part of West Philadelphia for nearly a century.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The 56<sup>th</sup> Street Station is located east of the reconstructed 60<sup>th</sup> Street Station, at the intersection of 56<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets. The station still retains historic features. Like the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street Station, the 56<sup>th</sup> Street Station consists of east and westbound station buildings, shelters, reinforced-concrete boarding platforms, and token booths. These components are arranged in a configuration similar to their counterparts at the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street Station. A reinforced concrete slab mezzanine, installed at the station during the late twentieth century, is located beneath the station buildings and boarding platforms; the token booths are located here. Modern sheltered metal staircases, subdivided by landings, lead from northeast and southeast corners of 56<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets to the stations. Like 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, staircases and landings mimic the original arrangement but no longer contain historic features.

East and westbound station buildings also share architectural similarities with those at 63<sup>rd</sup> Street. Both station buildings are capped by hipped roofs. The exterior facades are sheathed in rectangular copper panels divided by fluted pilasters at regular intervals. Clerestory windows pierce the facades. The rooflines are accentuated by Classical-style copper brackets and a denticulated cornice. Although interior details are obscured by modern metal siding, historic vertical board siding and rectangular panels are evident at the clerestory level.

Historic shelters are located on both platforms of the 56<sup>th</sup> Street station, as well. They retain the same style, form, and dimensions as those found at 63<sup>rd</sup> Street. Historic metal rails with quatrefoil spandrel panels line the northern and southern edges of the platform. Modern rails also occur in this area. In some of the sheltered areas of the platform, modern chain-link fencing extends from the rails to the shelter roof. Unlike the previous station, historic flat-roof shelters only extend approximately 1.21 meters (4 feet) from the east and west facades of station buildings. The shelters are supported by bracketed metal posts that rest on the elevated superstructure.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By the summer of 1906 the Elevated's superstructure was completed, and work on the stations commenced. Stations along the Market Street Elevated were designed according to high architectural and efficiency standards. The first section of the railway was laid at ground level in Upper Darby Township, Delaware County. Prior to completion of the subway-elevated system, Philadelphia Rapid Transit (PRT) joined forces with two suburban surface and rail companies to erect a large terminal that would connect the Market Street line with electric lines and railways that tapped portions of Delaware, Montgomery and Chester Counties (Anonymous 1908).

Like those at grade level (Millbourne Station and 69<sup>th</sup> Street Terminal), stations erected in West Philadelphia along the Market Street Elevated superstructure were also planned with the

highest efficiency standards. Local law dictated that stations be placed 0.80 kilometers (1/2 mile) apart on average. Eight stations, therefore, were built, located at the intersections of West Market Street and 63<sup>rd</sup>, 60<sup>th</sup>, 56<sup>th</sup>, 52<sup>nd</sup>, 46<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, 36<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> Streets (Anonymous 1908).

The elevated stations were uniformly designed in the Classical manner that was popular during the early 1900s. Station buildings, located on both the east and westbound platforms, housed waiting rooms, men's and women's toilets, token booths and locker areas. Amenities such as water coolers and candy machines were also provided. Turnstiles and sliding gates provided entry and egress to and from the platforms. The buildings themselves measured approximately 17.37 meters (57 feet) across by 5.02 meters (16.5 feet) deep, not including exit stiles and stair landings (Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company 1931).

The stations were designed as steel-frame buildings capped by hipped roofs. The exterior facades were sheathed in Classical-style copper paneling, pilasters and molding. The facades were punctuated by double-hung sash and clerestory windows. The eaves were embellished with copper lion heads placed at regular intervals around the roofline. The station interiors were sheathed in oak paneling. Each building was equipped with lights, a waiting room heated by electricity, and toilet facilities with tiled floors, wainscoting and modern plumbing. Shelters supported by bracketed structural posts extended along reinforced concrete platforms. Metal rails embellished with quatrefoil spandrel panels flanked the outer edges of both platforms. Access to each station was provided by staircases located at the four corners of each intersection. The staircases were subdivided by landings that were capped by tin-clad flat and pyramidal roofs with galvanized iron trimmings. The stair rails were also embellished with quatrefoil spandrel panels. Steel cross passages were also provided at every station. These features enabled passengers to safely move between east and westbound stations above the busy intersections (Evening Bulletin 1907; Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company 1905). Much of the decorative metal work and structural elements that adorned and supported the stations were produced by Belmont Iron Works of Philadelphia (Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company 1905).

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION/BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Engineering Drawings

Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company. "Market Street Elevated Passenger Railway Company Plans." 1905. On file at Frederic R. Harris, Inc., Philadelphia, PA. Soon to be on file at the City of Philadelphia Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

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\_\_\_\_\_. "Market Street Elevated Passenger Railway Company Plans." 1931. On file at Frederic R. Harris, Inc., Philadelphia, PA. Soon to be on file at the City of Philadelphia Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

### Secondary Sources

Anonymous. *Philadelphia's Rapid Transit: Being an Account of the Construction and Equipment of the Market Street Subway-Elevated and Its Place in the Great System and Service of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company Together with a Review of the Millard Construction Co.* Philadelphia: Arnold & Dyer, 1908.

Rachleff, Allison, and Mary Daughtrey. *Historic Resources Survey and Determination of Eligibility Report: Market Street Elevated Reconstruction Project, Borough of Millbourne and City of Philadelphia, Delaware and Philadelphia Counties, Pennsylvania.* Report prepared for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority. Report prepared by Cultural Heritage Research Services, Inc., North Wales, PA. 1996

### Newspapers

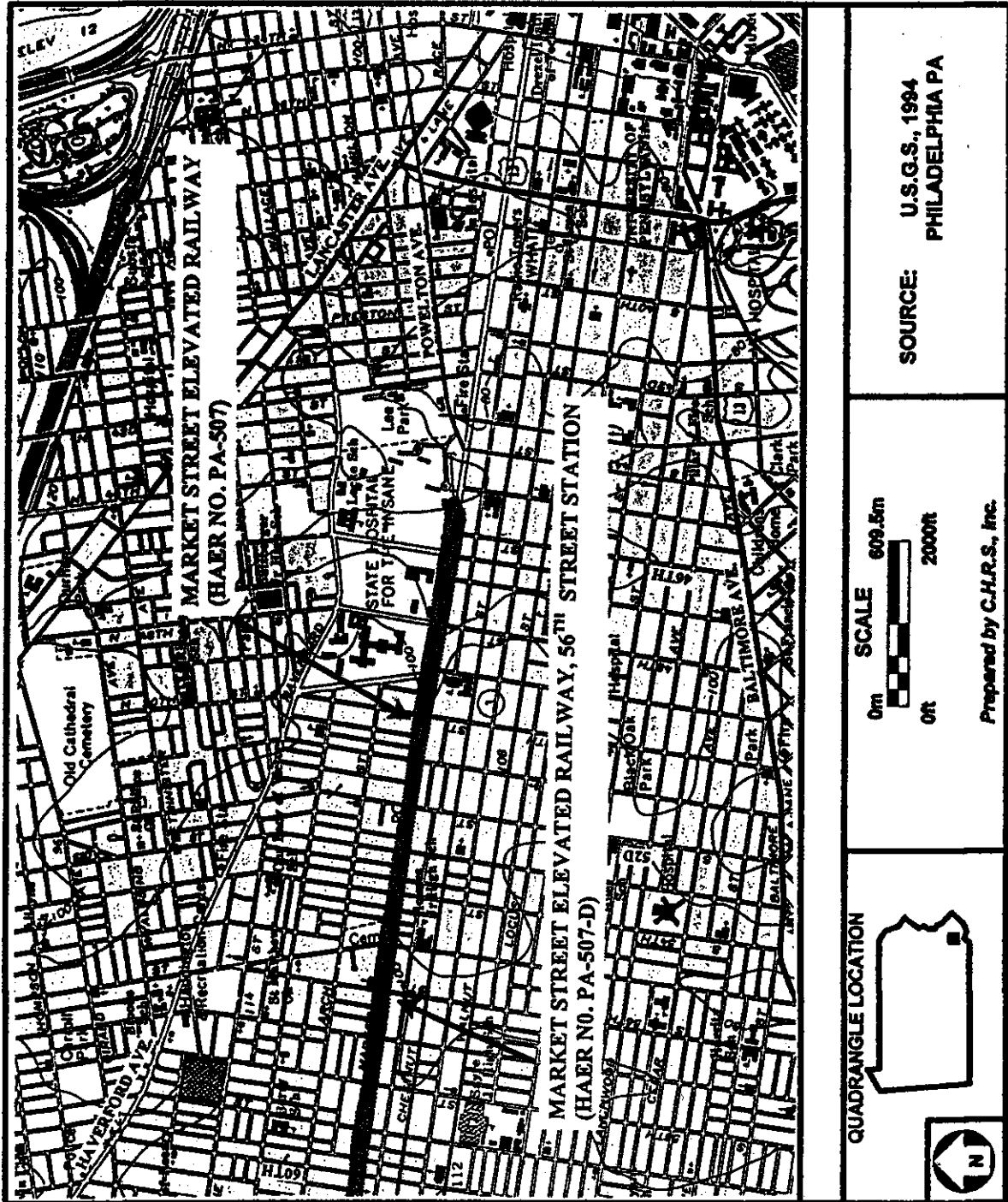
*Evening Bulletin*, March 7, 1907. "Features of New 'L' Opened To-day."

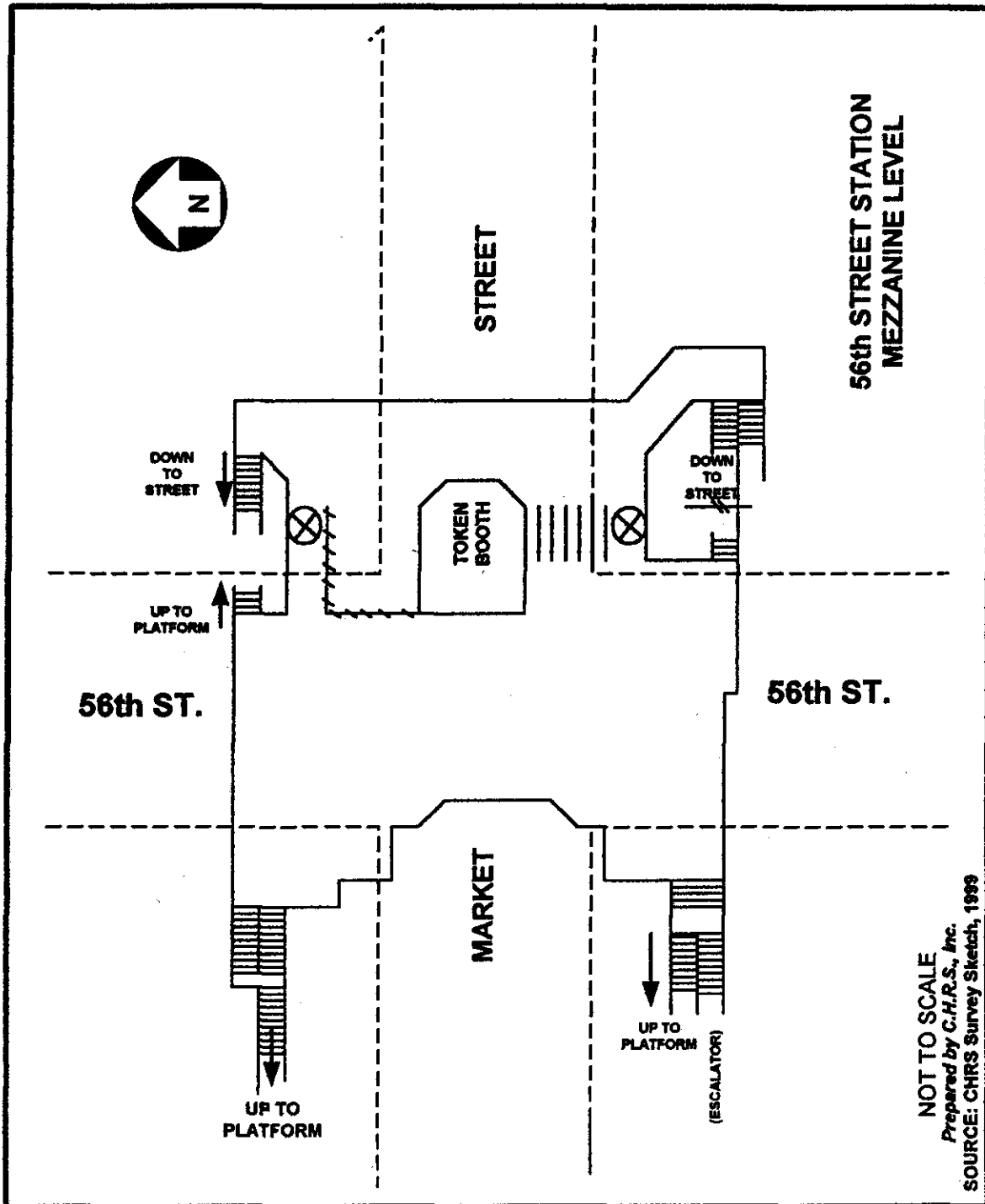
### Additional Resources

A large collection of historic photographs is located at the Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. These photos are of stations and the superstructure, construction of the line, as well as the dismantling of the Schuylkill River to 46<sup>th</sup> Street portion of the Elevated.

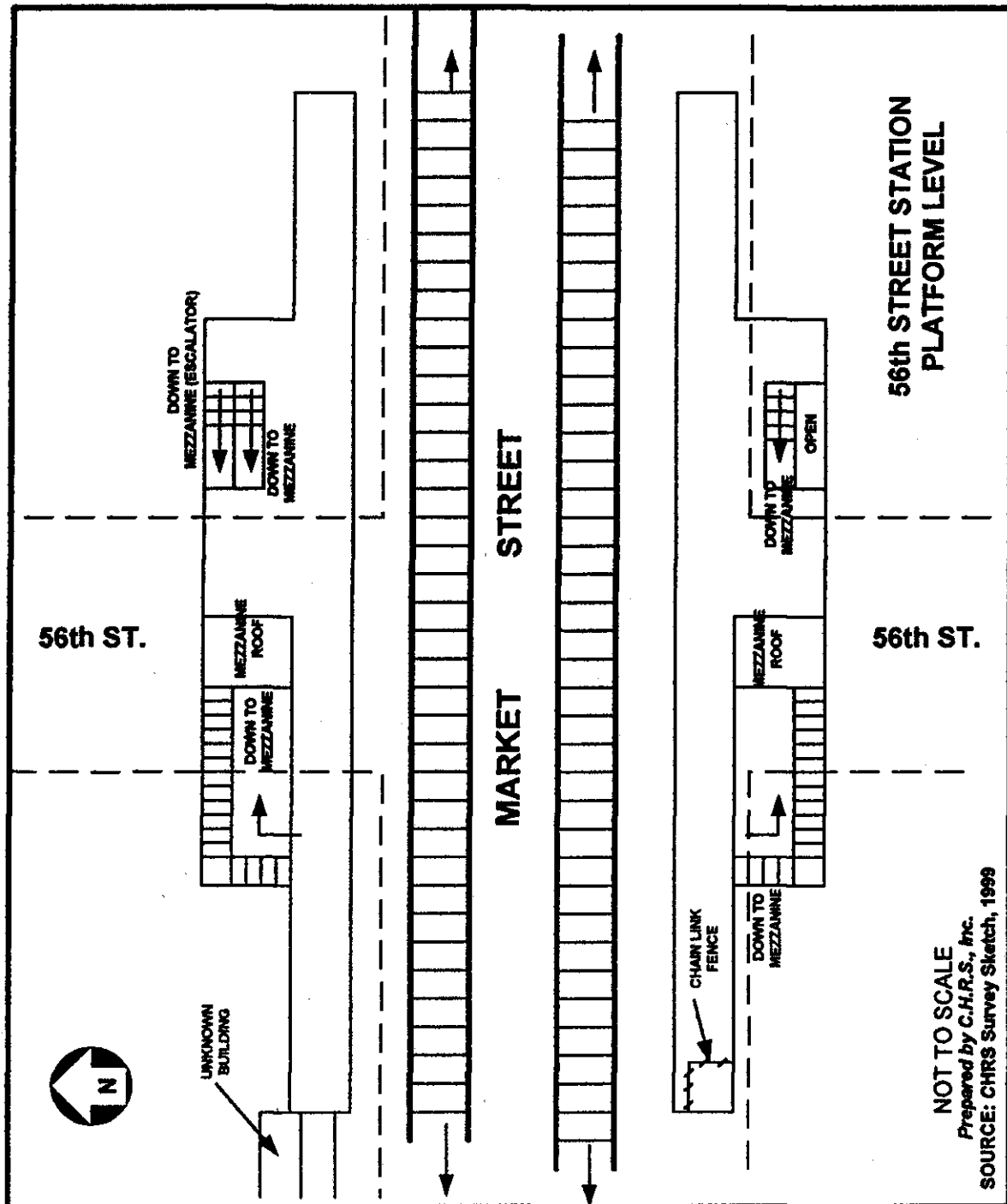
Cox, Harold E. *The Road from Upper Darby.* New York: Electric Railroaders' Association, Inc., 1967.

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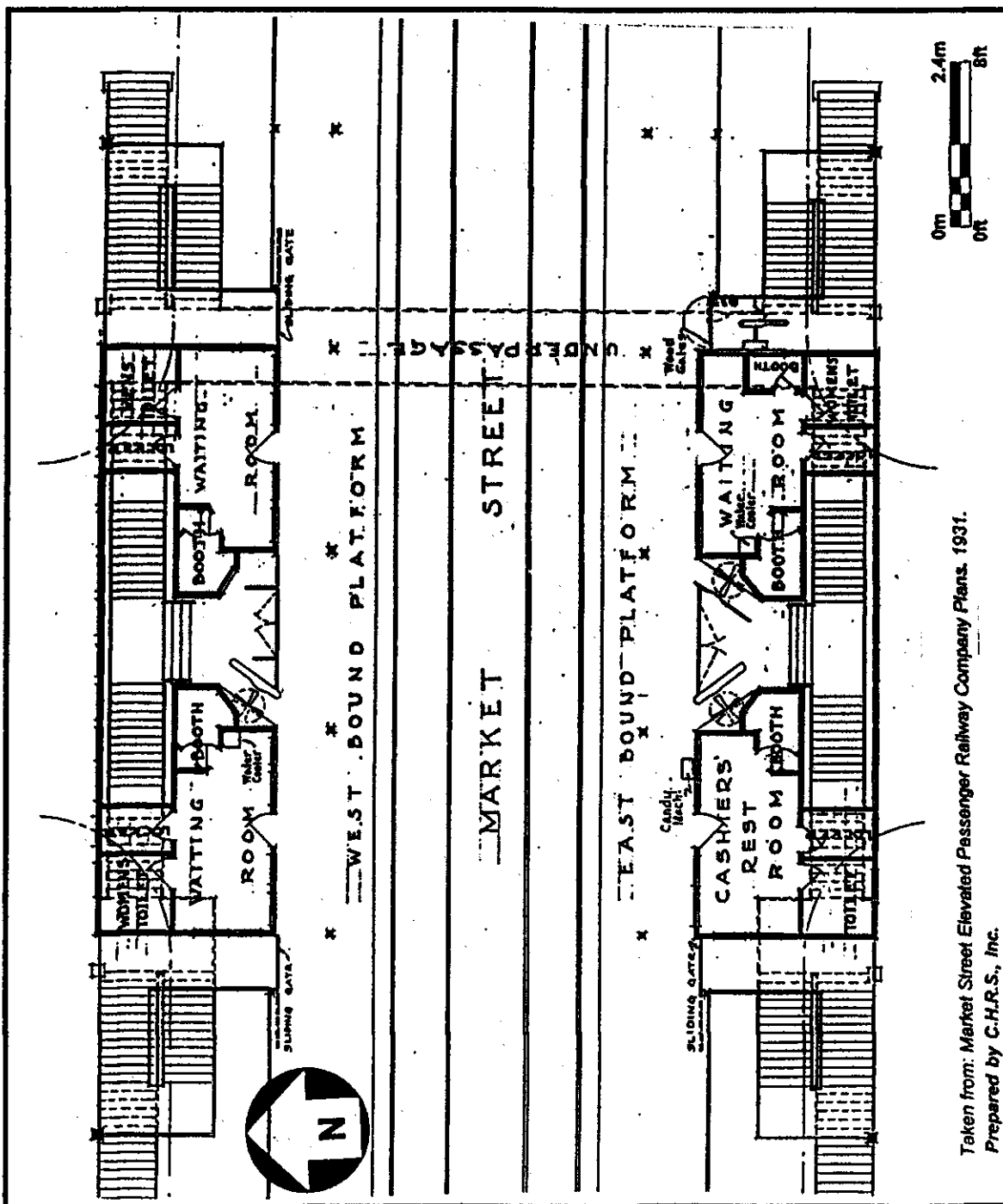








MARKET STREET ELEVATED RAILWAY, 56<sup>TH</sup> STREET STATION  
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Taken from: Market Street Elevated Passenger Railway Company Plans. 1931.  
 Prepared by C.H.R.S., Inc.